

Eoin Grogan and Helen Roche

Clay and Fire: the development and
distribution of pottery traditions
in prehistoric Ireland

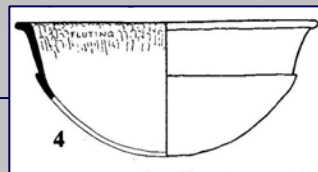
Making the pots: stage 1

- prehistoric pottery made with locally sourced sedimentary clays that also contain non-clay materials
- further inclusions consist of small stone particles (such as quartzite, dolerite, sandstone, shale or mica) and plant fibre, or occasionally grog (previously fired clay), that are mixed into the clay to facilitate even firing
- after mixing and kneading the clay most pots were built-up with coils of clay that were attached and pressed together; the surfaces were smoothed over and the vessel patted (with the hand or a 'paddle) to achieve the final shape and required wall thickness

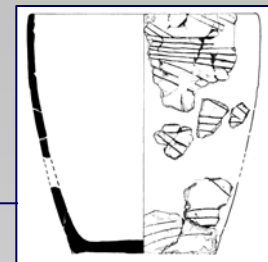
Making the pots: stage 2

- the pot is left to dry naturally to a ‘leather-hard’ condition: at this stage it can also be decorated or burnished (rubbed with a smooth stone or leather to provide a dull shine): the latter is rare except in the early Neolithic
- the pottery was fired in a kiln: in prehistoric Ireland pottery was fired in an open bonfire rather than a sealed kiln. This is identifiable in the colour variation on individual pots and a darker core or inner surface. This technology is known from comparative and experimental studies as no definite kilns have been found in Ireland
- The ceramic change occurs at temperatures of 700–800°C

The Early Neolithic: 4000–3600 BC



The Middle Neolithic: 3600–2900 BC

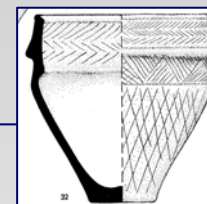


The Late Neolithic: 2900–2500 BC

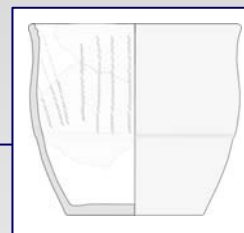
The Final Neolithic/ Early Bronze Age
(‘Copper Age’): 2500–2200 BC



The Early Bronze Age: 2200–1600 BC



The Middle Bronze Age: 1600–1100 BC



The Late Bronze Age: 1100–800 BC



The Early Iron Age: 800–400 BC

No Irish
pottery
recorded